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Request for the inclusion of a supplementary item in the agenda of the sixty-sixth session

Observer status for United Cities and Local Governments in the General Assembly

Letter dated 19 July 2011 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Turkey to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

In accordance with rule 14 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, I have the honour to request the inclusion in the agenda of the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly of a supplementary item entitled "Observer status for the United Cities and Local Governments in the General Assembly".

In accordance with rule 20 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, an explanatory memorandum (annex I) in support of the above-mentioned request and a draft resolution (annex II) are attached herewith.

We would highly appreciate it if the present letter and its annexes could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly.

(*Signed*) Fazli **Çorman**
Deputy Permanent Representative
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

11-42688 (E) 270711

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Annex I

Explanatory memorandum

The status of local governments before the United Nations: steps towards observer status in the General Assembly

Note by the World Secretariat of United Cities and Local Governments 2011

1. Chaired by the Mayor of Istanbul, United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) is the world organization of local and regional authorities. With members in 140 countries, it represents the interests of this group before the international community and promotes exchange and innovation among its members at the same time as fostering solidarity and development cooperation (see www.cities-localgovernments.org).

General situation

2. Local governments have a long history of cooperation with the United Nations, and United Cities and Local Governments and its founding organizations have been in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council since 1947.

3. Although this has ensured local government participation in United Nations meetings and summits, it is insufficient in two respects:

(a) Locally elected representatives are classified as non-governmental organizations, which is clearly not the case;

(b) It does not provide a direct link with the elected representatives of the General Assembly, the principal policymaking body of the United Nations.

Specific achievements

4. Through years of advocacy and lobbying, local governments and their associations have also achieved special status within specific United Nations agencies and processes:

(a) Local authorities are identified as one of nine "major groups" in Agenda 21;

(b) Local government representatives have a special relationship with the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) and, through rule 64 of the Rules of Procedure of the Governing Council, have distinct rights to participate as observers in the UN-Habitat Governing Council;

(c) In 2000, the United Nations Advisory Committee of Local Authorities was established, advising the UN-Habitat Executive Director;

(d) United Cities and Local Governments is a member of the Group of Friends of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations;

(e) United Cities and Local Governments represents local authorities in the Advisory Group of the Development Cooperation Forum led by the Under-Secretary-General of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat;

(f) United Cities and Local Governments is an observer of the Working Party on Aid Effectiveness of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, which is in charge of the follow-up to the Paris Agenda;

(g) Local governments have been explicitly acknowledged in the following Summit processes: Beijing +10, the Millennium +5 Summit and the World Water Forum;

(h) Subnational governments (including local authorities) are recognized as specific stakeholders in international climate change negotiations since the 16th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change held in Cancun, Mexico.

5. United Cities and Local Governments has reached agreements or memorandums of understanding with most of the United Nations agencies throughout the years.

United Cities and Local Governments ambitions: observer status in the General Assembly of the United Nations

6. United Cities and Local Governments and its members would like to be acknowledged by the United Nations system in its totality as representing a sphere of government and as clearly differentiated from other stakeholders such as civil society, the private sector or non-governmental organizations.

7. Permanent observers have the right to speak at General Assembly meetings, participate in procedural votes and sponsor and sign resolutions, but not to vote on resolutions and other substantive matters.

8. There is a distinction between State and non-State observers. The non-State observers are the international organizations and other entities.

9. Non-State entities that enjoy observer status are the International Committee of the Red Cross, the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the International Criminal Court, the International Olympic Committee, and the Sovereign Military Order of Malta.

The precedent for United Cities and Local Governments: case of the Inter-Parliamentary Union

10. The Inter-Parliamentary Union has observer status in the General Assembly as a representative of elected authorities since 19 November 2002.

11. United Cities and Local Governments is asserting that, as with the Inter-Parliamentary Union in General Assembly resolution 57/32, United Cities and Local Governments also enjoys a "unique status" as a world organization of local authorities, and the organization is convinced that it is in the interest of the United Nations to promote cooperation between the United Nations and local authorities in the era of urbanization. Proof of that is the list of relations already established, as mentioned above.

Annex II

Draft resolution

Observer status for United Cities and Local Governments in the General Assembly

The General Assembly,

Wishing to promote cooperation between the United Nations and United Cities and Local Governments,

1. *Decides* to invite United Cities and Local Governments to participate in the sessions and the work of the General Assembly in the capacity of observer;

2. *Requests* the Secretary-General to take the necessary action to implement the present resolution.